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ABSTRACT

This issue of a quarterly newsletter focuses on alternative assessment methods in adult basic education. It is occasioned, as explained in the opening editorial, by the announcement of the requirement for use of the 1987 edition of the Tests of Adult Basic Education for pre- and posttesting of basic education students in New York City, beginning in 1991. The editorial presents an overview of the assessment issue and suggests additional sources of information. Articles in the newsletter include the following: "Rethinking Assessment: Issues to Consider" (Marcie Wolfe); "Standardized Tests: Issues and Concerns" (Karen Griswold); "Alternative Assessment Strategies: Some Suggestions for Teachers" (Sara Hill); "Additional Sources of Information on Assessment-Related Issues" (a 16-item annotated bibliography); and "Mini-Grants 1988-1989." (KC)

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Information Update

SEPTEMBER 1989

Literacy Assistance Center, Inc.

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FROM THE EDITOR

The use of the standardized reading test as an assessment tool is an issue of deep concern to many educators - and one which has generated considerable controversy among adult literacy practitioners in particular. The controversy has been heightened by the joint announcement of the Mayor's Office of Educational Services (MOES) and the New York State Education Department (SED) of new testing guidelines* which call for the use of the 1987 edition of the TABE (Tests of Adult Basic Education) for pre and post-testing of basic education students in New York City, beginning in 1991. The 1987 edition of the TABE was chosen to replace the 1976 edition through a competitive RFP process conducted by SED and MOES.

While the new guidelines call for the continued use of standardized tests, practitioners will welcome an important change for beginning readers: only basic education students reading at or above the third grade level will be required to take the TABE.

A major struggle with regard to testing seems to focus on finding ways to be accountable to funders and the public in some quantifiable way, and at the same time creating ways for teachers to use appropriate assessment tools and processes which are an integral part of and inform the teaching and learning process.

There seems to be considerable agreement among adult literacy practitioners that the TABE (whether it be the 1976 or 1987 edition) is not only an inappropriate instrument for individual assessment, but that it does not measure what students know and have learned, that it does not inform the teaching and learning process, and that in fact it may act to discourage students as they re-involve themselves in the educational process.

**All program managers within the NYC Adult Literacy Initiative should have received a copy of the new testing guidelines issued by the Mayor's Office of Educational Services on August 23, 1989.*

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SPECIAL ISSUE ON ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT

While the debate about the use of standardized reading tests continues, there is a new movement emerging among adult literacy practitioners in New York City (not to exclude those examining the topic elsewhere) who have and are giving considerable thought to assessment issues. They are experimenting in their programs with approaches to assessment which are helping both teachers and learners better understand the ways in which adults learn to read and write. Armed with such knowledge, teachers are in a better position to plan instructional strategies.

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While much work and thought has been devoted to assessment issues, this is a nascent movement, but certainly one to which New York City's literacy practitioners are strongly committed. In this issue of *Information Update*, Marcie Wolfe, assistant director of the Institute for Literacy Studies at Lehman College, identifies some of the issues she and other members of New York City's Alternative Assessment Group feel are important to consider.

Implementing an alternative assessment model is a complex task. As Marcie points out, it has far-reaching implications for the ways in which programs are organized, ranging from our views of the teaching and learning process, staff development for teachers, the role that learners might play in the assessment process, to the kinds of record keeping and data analysis which would be necessary as a result of putting such a model into effect.

At a later date we hope to publish descriptions of the work being done in individual programs, and the Alternative Assessment Group is initiating plans to present at local workshops and conferences.

As a corollary to Marcie's piece, Karen Griswold, also of the Institute for Literacy Studies, looks at standardized reading tests and explains, on behalf of some members of the Alternative Assessment Group, why these tests are problematic to both teacher and student.

To assist practitioners in their own development of more appropriate assessment instruments and processes, Sara Hill of the Literacy Assistance Center describes some approaches she has found helpful. It is hoped that teachers and tutors who are unfamiliar with these approaches will begin to experiment with them in their own classrooms.

While we rail against standardized reading tests and criticize their negative impact on students, let us not forget that those of us who teach reading to adults are perfectly capable of doing well on those very same tests. For the time being they are an integral part of the fabric of our lives. One has to take tests to get into college, to enter the military and to obtain civil service employment, to mention just a few. While such tests should certainly not be the measure of individual student progress in the adult literacy classroom, we ought not to ignore the value for students of being familiar with them and being able to use them to their own advantage.

While practitioners continue to use standardized tests, it is important that they be clear about what the tests can and cannot measure, and that, as much as possible, that information be communicated to their students.

Finally, I think it is important that adult literacy practitioners involved in alternative assessment enlist the support of funders and invest as much effort and energy as necessary to refine and implement new assessment procedures. Practitioners need to be able to demonstrate to funders and policy makers that these procedures do work, that they can enhance our understanding of teaching and learning and that ultimately they will improve the quality of classroom instruction.

To assist readers in furthering their understanding of assessment issues, we refer you to the June 1988 issue of *Information Update* (you can call or write us for a copy). In that issue John Garvey published an annotated bibliography on assessment-related issues. We are reprinting some of those sources and are making note of a few additional ones.

In another vein, we are publishing summaries of the Literacy Assistance Center's mini-grant projects which were completed this past program year. You will note that at the end of each summary we indicate where you can get additional information on these projects.

As always, much thanks to Joan Pleune and other members of the Literacy Assistance Center staff for their editorial and other invaluable assistance in the writing and production of *Information Update*.

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Rethinking Assessment: Issues to Consider

by Marcie Wolfe
Institute for Literacy Studies,
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A growing number of programs in the New York City Adult Literacy Initiative have begun experimenting with alternative approaches to assessment. These experiments are part of a movement to reconceptualize assessment as an ongoing, participatory process serving more directly the needs of teachers, learners, and program administrators. The fact that there is now a climate for inquiry into this critical area is the result of a number of circumstances. First, it is now possible to read published accounts of alternative assessment projects; these reports have provided us with models for planning and administering assessment procedures, as well as with insights about adult learning and about differing concepts of success held by program staff and learners. Second, a number of New York City programs have worked for years to develop a more learner-centered approach to literacy education; through this process the contradictions between testing and learner-centered instructional practices have been uncovered. And finally, many of us have discovered the suitability for work with adult learners of qualitative research methods (i.e., interviews, observations, document analysis), which, unlike standardized tests, can provide rich data and reveal complex shifts in learning.

At the suggestion of Jean Fargo, Literacy Volunteers of NYC, the Literacy Assistance Center assembled a group of practitioners last June to share their current work in alternative assessment. (They have been meeting on a regular basis since that time.) Given the climate for change described above, this meeting seemed particularly timely. The group includes:

Fran Boren
Consortium for Worker Education
Jeanne Cowen
Brooklyn Public Library
Jon Deveaux & Deborah Shelton
Bronx Educational Services
Mae Dick & Fran Richetti
Literacy Assistance Center
Roger Dovner, Anne Lawrence & Melody Schneider
New York Public Library
Centers for Reading & Writing
Jean Fargo, Gary Murphy
Literacy Volunteers of NYC
Betty Gottfried
Board of Education
ABE/ESOL/HSE Services Program
Karen Griswold & Marcie Wolfe
Institute for Literacy Studies
Lehman College
Jane MacKillop
York College Learning Center
Adrienne Nicosia
Adult Learning Center
Lehman College

In sharing our work we affirmed our commitment to improving literacy assessment. We also discussed the variations among procedures being developed and field tested at different programs, particularly those arising out of differences in program goals and educational assumptions. Although a lengthy description of each of our projects is not possible in this article, what might be useful here is an exploration of some of our common concerns about developing alternative assessment procedures. These concerns might be of interest to others contemplating an alternative assessment project. They are described below in a very tentative way because the issues underlying them are complex and require much more consideration than I can give them here. What they can do, however, is begin a dialogue about assessment which can continue in later issues of this newsletter and perhaps extend to others in the literacy community.

1. **What do we mean by alternative assessment?** The term has been used by researchers, practitioners, and funders to mean some different things. In our group meetings "alternative assessment" has been defined as essentially program-based and learner-centered, and as involving a range of procedures which together provide a rich portrait of individuals' learning over time. With this definition it is not possible, therefore, to imagine a city-wide alternative assessment. Instead, we could imagine adopting city-wide a set of principles and processes used to inform the development of program-based

assessments which reflect a diversity of program goals and learner concerns.

2. **What assumptions about reading and writing underlie new assessment procedures?** Powerful assumptions about literacy learning underlie any approaches to alternative assessment. The use of portfolios in assessing writing, for example, suggests a belief that adult learners use writing of different types for a range of purposes, both in an educational setting and in their lives. Standardized tests, on the other hand, ignore writing and rely on a bottom-up, parts-to-whole concept of reading, despite years of research discrediting this view. We need to recognize the importance of examining, and possibly challenging, our assumptions about literacy teaching and learning before developing a new assessment. There is nothing alternative about new assessments which repackage the assumptions of the old ones.

3. **How will assessment relate to instruction?** In many programs, instruction halts in order for assessment to begin. Further, assessment is often unrelated to or incompatible with the content and processes of instruction (e.g., learners may be reading and raising their own questions about AIDS, but then must read and respond to pre-selected texts and questions on a test). On the other hand, when instruction is tied completely to assessment as in some competency-based models, there is no room for flexibility in materials and activities, or for definitions of progress outside the system's focus. Those of us interested in developing alternative assessment procedures need to consider ways to relate--or even integrate--instruction and assessment to promote both congruency and flexibility.

4. **What is the relationship of staff development to the development of learner assessment procedures?** Alternative procedures place a great deal of the responsibility for assessment in the hands of teachers and learners. We need to plan staff development activities which assist teachers and tutors in 1) understanding the important role assessment can play in their classes, 2) planning and sharing assessment/instructional activities, and 3) documenting changes in learners over time.

5. **How is writing to be assessed?** In the past few years, work with writing has become a critical part of what we do. Yet (to our relief) no formal assessment in adult literacy addresses writing, possibly because it is difficult to quantify or because it is not within the concept of literacy underlying the test. Many of us already keep portfolios of student writing. If we agree that writing is an important part of our programs and should be assessed, we need to determine which features of the writing in portfolios count as evidence of change and growth.

6. **What role should learners play in their own assessment?** Traditionally assessment has been done **to** adult learners rather than **with** them. This process often replicates the conditions of learners' past failure in school, contradicts the view that adults should be in control of their own learning, and provides very limited paper-and-pencil data. Yet this form of assessment is the one most familiar to learners in our programs. We may need to work with learners to expand their test-based concepts of success and prepare them for a more learner-centered assessment model. A shift to qualitative methods almost compels us to involve learners. We need to consider the role learners can play in collaborating with staff on their own assessment: for example, in identifying their goals and purposes for literacy, choosing materials to be read during an assessment and writings to be reviewed, or in providing self-reports of progress in journals and in peer interviews. In these ways assessment can become as participatory and respectful as we expect our instruction to be.

7. **What types of record keeping and data analysis should be going on?** One reason why test data remain the most common indicator of learner progress is that they are easy to score and report. In doing more qualitative data collection, we need to make decisions about what records are kept, how data from interviews are recorded, and how to make summary statements about individuals and groups. Two critical issues we face are 1) how programs can come to understand and use the data they collect, and 2) how (or whether) to make detailed program data about learner progress reportable to funders and other interested outsiders.

Assessment is among the most important issues we face in adult literacy. The concerns I've outlined above demonstrate that in developing alternatives to traditional assessment methods, we find ourselves examining other issues for our programs: program goals and philosophy, instruction and curriculum, staff development, student impact, accountability. The ways in which various programs respond to these concerns through the development of alternative assessment procedures will be of interest and importance to all of us.

Standardized Tests: Issues and Concerns

Many of us have received the letter from the City letting us know about the decision to use the new TABE test in New York City adult literacy programs. We are concerned about the decision, and are writing to outline some of our objections to the use of standardized tests as a measure of student progress.

Standardized tests aren't good instruments for measuring an individual's progress. Even educators who support the use of standardized tests as a way to survey the progress of large groups of people, such as in a school district, don't view the tests as a way to look at an individual's progress over time. Although the city and state never intended to use the scores to measure individual progress, teachers and program managers--as well as students--often think and talk about the scores in this way.

Standardized tests generally don't reflect the type of reading adults do in life, except in other testing situations. Because most standardized tests contain short, decontextualized paragraphs written with a content and style similar to school textbooks followed by multiple-choice questions with predetermined answers, they do not reflect the variety and richness of the reading adults do. The information they give only tells us how a student performs in a situation with a task unlike any other the person might want or need to do. Knowing how a student performs on this type of test does not tell us how well the student might handle novels, magazines, newspapers, or job-related reading.

Students view their TABE scores as a definitive mark of failure or success. Although little of the complex process of reading is captured through a test, students frequently improve their reading (and writing) in ways that they can demonstrate - reading longer and more complex texts, seeing themselves as a reader, connecting their own experience to the text - yet they fail to improve on the TABE. Even when the teacher and program use other kinds of assessments in addition to a standard measure, students often see the TABE as the "real measure" since it is most similar to the tests they've taken in school. This is not to say that some students don't get stuck in the process of learning to read and write, but rather to point out that many students who are not at all stuck don't improve on the test.

Teachers get a mixed message about effective instruction when the measurement instrument contradicts what they know about their students' reading and writing processes. Many recent staff development efforts have encouraged teachers to incorporate approaches to the teaching

This article was written by **Karen Griswold** and endorsed by the following members of the Alternative Assessment Group*:

Mae Dick & Fran Richetti
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New York Public Library
Jon Deveaux & Deborah Shelton
Bronx Educational Services
Gary Murphy & Jean Farpo
Literacy Volunteers of New York City
Jeanne Cowen
Brooklyn Public Library
Betty Gottfried
Board of Education
ABE/ESL/HSE Services Program

**See Marcie Wolfe's article for a description of the Alternative Assessment Group.*

of reading and writing which have their roots in recent theory and research. Some of these practices include small group discussions of reading, and explicit attention to the strategies people apply in reading different types of material in different situations. These approaches share a central assumption that instruction should offer learners opportunities to select what they read and respond to it out of their knowledge and experience. Yet the test contradicts these assumptions.

The TABE does not provide students or teachers with information that helps them better plan instruction. Although the TABE claims to give useful diagnostic information for teachers, the type of information it gives does not give teachers an idea of a student's strengths and weaknesses. The distinction the TABE makes between vocabulary and comprehension scores is not a useful one, and the numerical score the test produces is reductive. The descriptive information useful in assessment for both students and teachers cannot be simplified to a grade level equivalent.

The TABE does not reflect current thinking in the field of reading. In recent years, reading has often been described as an interact[illegible]rocess. In order for readers to understand texts, they must bring their own experience to it. Comprehension, then, is not in the text itself, but rather in the interaction between the reader and the text. None of us, then - regardless of how experienced we are with reading - have any one single reading "level." Rather, the difficulty of the material we are able to handle depends in large part on our prior knowledge in that area. This model of reading poses three problems (at least) that make accurate assessment of reading difficult and tests close to useless:

1) *Choice of material.* If reading is in fact based on a person's ability to make connections to the text, an assessment instrument needs to include material appropriate for that person. Although this isn't difficult with an individual student--where a person might choose a piece of text to use for an assessment--it makes the choice of materials for standard measures problematic. Although text choice is an issue with both children and adults, it is particularly problematic with adults. In an ABE class, it is not unusual to have people who have grown up in the U.S. as well as people who grew up in other countries, some students with formal schooling, some without--truly a variety of cultures and ways of seeing the world. Almost any choice of text ends up being biased.

2) *Types of tasks.* Since people understand texts differently from each other, questions developed by someone other than the reader are seldom useful ways of assessing comprehension. Rather than demonstrating the reader's ability to interact with the text, test questions demonstrate the reader's ability to answer that type of question.

3) *Vocabulary.* The TABE treats vocabulary predominantly in isolation, although recent research in reading shows how the meaning of words are determined through context. Even when phrases for target vocabulary words are used in the TABE, there is no larger context for phrases. As Roger Farr and Robert F. Carey point out in their excellent book on assessment *Reading: What Can Be Measured?:*

> *...A vast number of tests attempt to assess vocabulary skills by presenting words in isolation and directing students to select the best synonym from a number of alternatives. ...The testing of words in isolation seems to ignore that both the most highly recommended teaching practices and research and theory emphasizes that the meaning of a word depends on the context in which the word occurs. (pages 100-101)*

Practitioners Need to be Involved in Policy Discussions of Assessment. Although many teachers and program administrators object to the use of standardized reading tests--and the TABE in particular--there has not been much public discussion of testing among practitioners and funders in the New York City adult literacy community. We encourage people who feel as we do to describe their own experiences with the test and their objections to it. Similarly, we encourage people who believe standardized tests do have a place in adult basic education to present their arguments for the tests.

It is in the best interests of the field and the students who are served by adult literacy programs, that practitioners and funders work together to develop ways, other than through standardized tests, to measure student progress and change. We welcome and look forward to this challenge.

Alternative Assessment Strategies: Some Suggestions for Teachers

by Sara Hill
Literacy Assistance Center

Standardized testing is only one pane of the multi-faceted window through which we can view the progress of literacy students. While tests measure whether students can do isolated skills out of context, they do not reflect or encourage the kinds of behaviors that go on in 'real' reading and writing.

Students' reading and writing often change in a *qualitative* sense rather than in a *quantitative* sense (one that can be measured), very often in the context of a great deal of reading and writing done for a variety of purposes. These changes can often be identified by the students themselves, encouraging critical, reflective thinking about reading/writing processes. While some programs may be required to administer a standardized test, teachers and students can often make an assessment using other, less formal strategies. The following is a list of some 'homemade' tools which teachers could use with their students.

1. Writing Folders/Portfolios:[1] The writing folder or portfolio is a way of keeping track of the changes in individual student writing, and contains all writing from the beginning of the class -- scraps, notes, drawings, lists, drafts, revisions, final pieces, etc. Journal entries, too, may be important to keep in the folder. All should be dated so that you can have a clear sense of writing growth, and both student and teacher should have access to it -- perhaps keeping it in a special 'folder box.' From time to time the teacher and student should go through the folder, with the student selecting 'favorite' and least favorite pieces and talking about what worked and didn't work. Teacher and student might also note changes in the spelling and mechanics of writing over time, and whether or not a student is revising or has discovered new revision strategies. "What emerges," according to Dennie Wolf, " is not just insight about paragraphs or pieces...(but) histories as writers."

2. Reading File: A reading file is a way for students to keep track of the books they've read over the course of the year or cycle, and could be an important part of a self-assessment procedure. The file could be an index box left where each student would have her own card with sections for the date the book was read, the title, and any other comment the reader has (i.e., that it was interesting, a part was confusing, a small summary). The student could use the card as a way to reflect on what she's been reading, how she may be understanding books differently or enjoying books more, in addition to seeing the number of books read over a period of time. The cards might contain room for comments about other kinds of reading the student has been doing, for example, the reading of letters, newspapers, magazines, recipes, etc.

3. Interviews: An initial interview seems to be crucial in finding out students' needs, interests and goals. The information from intake interviews can be helpful in planning lessons and in assessment down the road. Interviews can be simply done, and not only ask students about their hopes and goals for the future, but about their past learning experiences, their feelings about reading and writing, and their ideas about how to go about doing it. The interview can be redone at a later date with the student, perhaps exploring what goals have been met. Also, the student's changing views of reading and writing can be an important aspect of emerging literacy. For example, a student may have started out equating spelling with writing, but change this notion to include clarity, meaning, and communication.

4. Tape Recording Oral Reading and Self-Assessment of Oral Reading Miscues:[2] Oral reading isn't always the best way to assess reading

(Continued on page 9)

1.See the work of Anne Bingham, "Using Writing Folders to Document Student Progress" in *Understanding Writing: Ways of Observing, Learning and Teaching*. Thomas Newkirk and Nancy Atwell, eds. 1988, Chelmsford, Mass.: Northeast Regional Exchange. Also see Dennie Palmer Wolf's "Portfolio Assessment: Sampling Student Work" in *Educational Leadership*, April, 1989.

2.The idea for tape recording came from Rita Kelly at the International Center for the Disabled in New York City. The idea for self assessment of miscues came from Marilyn Collins of Literacy Volunteers of New York City.

Additional Sources of Information on Assessment-Related issues

We refer you to the Literacy Assistance Center's June 1988 issue of *Information Update* for an annotated bibliography on assessment-related articles and texts. We are reprinting some of those sources in this issue and have added ones on the topic published more recently.

Carole Edelsky and Susan Harman. "One More Critique of Reading Tests - with Two Differences," *English Education*, October 1988. The authors restate earlier criticisms of the abuses of testing and "offer two new contributions: (a) The argument that tests can never test reading or writing because the conception of reading/writing inherent in tests is faulty; and (b) suggestions for alternatives to testing that are congruent with a more adequate conception of reading/writing."

Peter Johnston. "Constructive Evaluation and the Improvement of Teaching and Learning," *Teachers College Record*, Volume 90, Number 4, Summer 1989. The author argues that "the purpose of educational evaluation is ultimately to contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning," but that psychometrics, and its "principle concepts of objectivity and validity...actually do substantial damage..." when applied to evaluation in real situations. Only through the use of alternative methods to psychometric evaluation will we be able to improve teaching and learning.

Leo M. Schell. "Dilemmas in Assessing Reading Comprehension," *The Reading Teacher*, October 1988. In this article the author argues that diagnostic procedures have not kept pace with profound changes in our understanding of reading comprehension instruction. His view is that the interactive model of reading may cause us to question some of our traditional procedures for diagnosing reading comprehension.

North Dakota Study Group on Evaluation. This group, established in the early 1970s, has as its major goal "to provide materials for teachers, parents, school administrators and governmental decisionmakers...that might encourage re-examination of a range of evaluation issues and perspectives about schools and schooling." To this end, the Study Group has published a series of monographs on evaluation issues. For more information, write to North Dakota Study Group on Evaluation, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota 58202.

Pat Tirone. "Teaching and Testing - Can We Keep Our Balance." Unpublished. Available at the Literacy Assistance Center. In this article Pat Tirone evaluates oral interview tests such as the John Test, used in most ESL programs in New York City. She argues that the kinds of tasks required of ESL students on many oral interview tests devalue the way in which people normally participate in conversation. Sharing information with others is considered "cheating," and "participating in mutually shared and self-correcting communication" which is natural when one carries on a conversation, is contrary to what is expected on such tests.

Educational Leadership, April, 1989. Vol. 46, No. 7, a publication of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. This entire issue, entitled Redirecting Assessment, is devoted to assessment issues and contains a number of excellent articles on the topic. The issue is available for review at the Literacy Assistance Center's Clearinghouse.

Elsa Auerbach. "Competency-Based ESL: One Step Forward or Two Steps Back?" *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 3, September 1986. Auerbach raises questions about the underlying orientations of competency models in ESL assessment. Her comments are relevant to competency models in basic education as well.

Roger Farr & Robert F. Carey. *Reading: What Can Be Measured?*, Second Edition. International Reading Association, 1986. This is a very balanced and mainstream review of the limitations and possibilities of standardized test type measures of reading. It is probably much more critical about the claims made by the proponents of standardized tests than readers would expect, but the authors nonetheless believe that such tests are appropriate measures of educational efforts.

Peter Johnston. "Understanding Reading Disability: A Case Study Approach," *Harvard Education Review*, Vol. 55, No. 2, May, 1985. This is a study of the reading behavior of three adults and has dramatic implications for how we think about reading difficulty. Johnston argues that the nature of reading difficulty resides more in individuals' conceptual strategies and affective responses rather than in perceptual deficits.

Peter Johnston. "Teachers as Evaluation Experts," *The Reading Teacher*, Volume 40, No. 8, April, 1987. Johnston argues that classroom based evaluation by teachers is far more instructionally valuable and efficient than that provided by standardized tests.

Irwin Kirsch & Anne Jungeblut, *Literacy: Profiles of America's Young Adults*. A Report by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, Educational Testing Service, 1986. This often referred to report offers a refreshing look at the literacy capacities of a cross-section of young adults. It is informed by a fairly sophisticated understanding of literacy and psychometric principles. The full report describes, in detail, the methodology of the study.

Susan Lytle, et. al., "Literacy Theory in Practice: Assessing Reading and Writing of Low-Literate Adults." A paper originally presented at the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association in San Francisco, April, 1985. This is a report of a research project which investigated and attempted to change the ways in which assessment was conducted by the Literacy Research Center at the University of Pennsylvania at the Centers for Literacy in Pennsylvania. The project was motivated by a conviction that skills deficits were only a small part of the portrait of student abilities, desires and goals that program staff needed to draw.

Clifford Hill & Kate Parry. *Reading Assessment: Autonomous and Pragmatic Models of Literacy*. LC Report 88-2, Literacy Center, Teachers College, Columbia University. This is a detailed study of the 1976 and 1987 versions of the TABE. The authors are especially concerned to examine how different theoretical models of literacy affect test construction and interpretation.

Anne Bussis and Edward Chittenden. "Research Currents: What the Reading Tests Neglect." *Language Arts*, Volume 64, Number 3, March, 1987. These two Educational Testing Service researchers draw upon years of research into children's learning to read to point out some of the shortcomings of standardized tests.

Deborah Meier. *Reading Failure and the Tests*, 1973. An occasional paper of the Workshop Center for Open Education at City College. Meier, currently the director of the Central Park East Secondary School, argues that standardized tests fundamentally distort approaches to reading instruction, guarantee the production of reading failure and are most damaging to those students who need the most help.

Stephen Reder. "Comparative Aspects of Functional Literacy Development: Three Ethnic American Communities," Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Although Reder's research was conducted primarily within an ESL framework, he situates the technological or skill aspects of literacy within a broader social and cultural context.

(**Hill**-Continued from page 7)
fluency, but most students see reading out loud in terms of confidence. If you or your program do an oral reading inventory, you might ask if the student would like to tape record his reading. Then, when you administer the task again after a few months, you might listen together to the previous recording and talk about changes that have taken place.Also, it can be very helpful to share miscues with students, and for them to talk about why they think they make the miscues that they do. They can also become aware of the reading cues *that they use already*, such as reading for meaning, word beginnings, etc.

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Mini-Grants 1988 - 1989

The following is a description of mini-grant projects completed in the 1988-89 program year.

New York City Field Trips by Kate Kemper and Jim Roth, formerly with the Riverside Adult Learning Center and currently staff developers for CUNY's adult literacy program. The authors have developed a creative and interesting guidebook for teachers who wish to extend classroom learning to "real world" experiences. Cognizant of the fact that teachers do not always have the time to adequately research field trips before embarking on them, Kate and Jim have prepared lesson plans which provide teachers with ready-made activities for students. Their guide includes trips to the Statue of Liberty, Columbia University's outdoor sculpture, the St. Agnes Branch of the New York Public Library and Central Park.

Since the authors encourage teachers to go places students are interested in, they emphasize that the types of exercises and principles developed in the guide can be applied to any field trip.

For a copy of the field trip guide, contact Joan Pleune at the Literacy Assistance Center.

Student Newsletter. Eva Jackson of the Brooklyn Public Library's literacy program received a grant to develop an intra-library student newsletter. The students were an integral part of the project and assumed responsibilities related to all aspects of the development of the newsletter. Students formed the editorial staff. They visited other library sites to promote the newsletter and solicit articles from students, they entered students' writings into the computer, did layouts and selected graphics appropriate for certain articles.

The project proved to be an excellent educational experience for students and allowed them to apply reading and writing skills to a real world situation.

For information on Brooklyn Public Library's student newsletter, contact Eva Jackson at (718) 783-3010.

Student and Staff Curriculum Development Project. Four staff members from LaGuardia Community College's Adult Learning Center - Lou DeFeo, Liz Gieske, Andy Wainer and Phil Akre - embarked on an ambitious project to involve 3rd and 4th level basic education students in a thematically-centered curriculum development project. A small group of students brainstormed with staff over a period of several meetings to identify areas of interest to students. Through a process of elimination students came to focus on a unit entitled *Food, Health and Nutrition.* They developed a questionnaire to try and get at eating habits and behaviors related to the unit and administered the questionnaire to other students.

To enhance their understanding of nutrition, they invited a college nutritionist to speak to their class and then generated writings on what they had learned. In an effort to examine their own eating habits, students involved in the project kept journals of their daily menus.

While the project did not yield the developed curriculum originally envisioned, the LaGuardia staff gained insight into ways of involving students in literacy programming, and students had an opportunity to develop writing, organizing and problem solving skills.

Call Joan Pleune at the Literacy Assistance Center for a description of the project.

Developing a Model for Student Involvement in an Adult Basic Education Program. This report, written by Barbara Gross, describes her efforts to involve students at Bronx Educational Services (a community-based literacy program) in decision making and program planning. Her efforts were complicated by the program's recent decision to add ESL and BENL (Basic Education in the Native Language) classes, and its commitment to involve students from these classes despite differences in language and culture.

Barbara provides a detailed and informative account of both the joys and difficulties she experienced in taking on this project. One of the aspects of the project which posed a major challenge was finding ways to work with English-speaking and Spanish-speaking students who had limited knowledge of one another's language. While the project may not have succeeded in fulfilling its original goals, it provides helpful insights for other practitioners who may wish to encourage greater student involvement in their programs. For a copy of Barbara's report, contact Joan Pleune at the Literacy Assistance Center.

AIDS Education. Alvin Buzzard of the YMCA ELESAIR Project (a community-based ESL program) has been very active in training teachers about ways to integrate AIDS education in the ESL and BE classroom. With help from the Community Development Agency and a mini-grant from the Literacy Assistance Center, Alvin conducted a day-long workshop on AIDS education for 20 BE and ESL teachers. For more information on Alvin's work, contact him at the YMCA ELESAIR Project at (212) 741-8726.

Domestic Violence Project. Lorraine Marx-Singer, a staff member of the Board of Education's ABE/ESL/HSE Services program, convinced that adult literacy classes offered a unique opportunity for teachers and counselors to explore the topic of domestic violence with students, has developed an "interactive teaching module" on the topic for use with BE and upper level ESL students. The module includes a variety of activities which focus on myths and facts about domestic violence. It includes information on how to get out of an abusive relationship as well as a list of resources for battered women. While Lorraine has not completed all aspects of the project, the parts mentioned above which are now available will prove extremely helpful to teachers and counselors.

For a copy of her project report, call Joan Pleune at the Literacy Assistance Center.

Contrasts and Contradictions: Video Icons of Urban Life. Joan Giummo and Nolan Poole created three four-minute silent video segments, each containing elements of contradiction designed to evoke debate, questioning, and explanation which might lead learners to social/political consciousness and social action. The video makers, both staff members of the Board of Education's ABE/ESL/HSE Services program, base their project on the work of Paulo Freire who terms such contradictions as "codifications." A codification can be in the form of a picture, song, play or artwork according to the film makers. They chose the video image in which to capture contradictions implicit of life in an American city. The contradictions covered in the video relate to the topics of housing and food. It is available for viewing at the Literacy Assistance Center.

Mother's Reading Program Library Project. Maritza Arrastia of the American Reading Council received a mini-grant to provide students in the Mother's Reading Program with an opportunity to organize and establish a library for their use. The purpose of the library was two-fold: (1) to provide adult students with a work opportunity which integrated the use of basic skills and (2) to establish a library which could be used by mothers who were interested in fostering good reading habits in their children. For more information on this project, contact Maritza Arristia at the American Reading Council, (212) 619-6044.

Aaron Diamond Fellows

The following individuals have been selected as the Literacy Assistance Center's 1989-90 Aaron Diamond Fellows:

Miguel Batista
The Door
Charles Braver
York College
Mary Ann Cornell
Queensborough Public Library
Lona Alida Jack
Community Development Agency
Rita Kelly
International Center for the Disabled
Andy Kirshner
Brooklyn Public Library
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Centers for Reading & Writing
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Sara McLennan
Banana Kelly
Maritza Pritsos
Hellenic American Action Committee
Millie Rapp
Bronx Educational Services
Melody Schneider
New York Public Library
Centers for Reading & Writing

The *Information Update* is the quarterly newsletter of the Literacy Assistance Center. The Center also publishes a monthly Calendar which provides readers with information on employment opportunities, upcoming events and funding possibilities.

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